

Consumer Condom Availability & Access to Purchase Report

January 2007

Introduction

The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) conducted this study to determine whether condoms are readily available and accessible to consumers in the Metropolitan Phoenix area. The study was conducted in response to a December 20, 2006 article in the *Arizona Republic* suggesting that some pharmacies and other retail outlets are restricting easy access to condoms (“*Why are some Arizona pharmacies taking such high-security precautions to protect the protection?*”¹) in the Phoenix Metro area.

The objective of this study is to determine: 1) whether condoms are widely available in different commercial venues; and 2) whether point of purchase displays are easily accessible to consumers.

Methods

Teams of ADHS surveyors were sent to selected groupings of stores that would be expected by the public to stock condoms and asked to determine whether condoms were for sale and whether the merchandising location was such that the condoms were readily available. If condoms were placed in a lockable case or behind a counter they were not considered to be readily available.

Results

Of the 417 commercial establishments surveyed, 404 (97%) offered condoms for sale. Among these establishments, 272 (67%) placed condoms in a way where they were readily available, and 132 (33%) placed them in locations where customers would not have easy access. Ease of availability is nearly universal among Pharmacies and Other category stores, but not among Grocery and Convenience/Gas category stores.

Condom Ease of Purchase by Retail Category

Store Type	# Surveyed	Stocking Condom	Readily Available	Not Readily Available
Grocery	126	92%	58%	34%
Convenience/Gas	174	99%	49%	50%
Pharmacy Only	81	99%	96%	2.5%
Other	36	97%	97%	0%

¹ Officials upset as stores lock up condoms - Michael Keefer, The Arizona Republic, 12/20/2006;

Condom Ease of Purchase by Retailer

Store Name	# Surveyed	Stocking Condoms	Where In Stock:	
			Readily Available	Not Readily Available
Grocery Stores:				
A	32	100%	87%	13%
B	28	100%	25%	75%
C	23	61%	14%	86%
D	30	100%	93%	7%
E	8	100%	100%	0%
F	3	100%	0%	100%
Grocery (other)	2	50%	0%	100%
Pharmacy Only	81	99%	97%	3%
Convenience/Gas Stores:				
A	45	100%	38%	62%
B	121	99%	54%	45%
C	3	100%	67%	33%
Convenience/Gas Stores (other)	5	80%	20%	80%
Other Department/Discount stores	36	97%	97%	3%

Discussion

Ease of purchase depends upon the individual store, even within general store type. But they also vary greatly between different store types. Access to condom purchase is least restrictive in pharmacies (96 % readily accessible). Condom access is most restricted in convenience/gas stores (49% readily accessible). Grocery stores that do not have pharmacy departments also have more restrictive access than do grocery stores that have pharmacies.

There are also observable variations by region within the greater Phoenix Metro area. Condom access is least restricted in North Phoenix, and in the far east and south-east suburban areas, and most restrictive in the central/west-central Phoenix, and Tempe areas, and perhaps along interstate corridors. Patterns of regional variation are less defined, and therefore more difficult to evaluate.

Previous studies (American Demographics, 1996 http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m4021/is_n1_v18/ai_18076308) suggest that pharmacies are the primary point of purchase of condoms. Forty-five percent (45%) of condom buyers nationwide purchase them in pharmacies, 35% in discount stores, and 27 % in supermarkets. Since people can buy condoms in more than one type of store,

the total sums to more than 100%.

We can estimate the relative “ease of purchase” of condoms in our study area by using the data collected in our study and assuming that the average Arizona condom shopper has similar point of purchase habits as the average American shopper, and gets their condoms at pharmacies 45% of the time, at a grocery store or convenience stores 27% of the time, and at a discount (other) store 35% of the time.

By weighting the proportion of condom purchases that will be "readily available" by point of purchase retail category our study suggests that approximately 78% of condom shoppers in the study area are likely to seek the purchase of a condom in a retail establishment where the product is easily accessible without the help of the retailer.

Conclusions

Condoms are readily accessible to consumers in the majority of retail outlets surveyed.

Pharmacies provided the most convenient and readily accessible condom purchase locations. Convenience stores nearly always stock condoms, but access to the condoms without the assistance of the retail clerk is often limited, with approximately 50% of convenience locations merchandising the condoms behind the counter.

Weighted for purchase location, approximately 78% of condom shoppers in the study area are likely to seek the purchase of a condom in a retail establishment where the product is easily accessible without the help of the retailer.